

Stoke Gifford Parish Council Freedom of Information Policy

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives individuals the right to access information held by public bodies which include Stoke Gifford Parish Council. Detailed information can be obtained from the Information Commissioner's website: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Stoke Gifford Parish Council sees the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act as a welcome opportunity both to improve the ways in which it informs the public it serves and to improve the ways in which it manages the information it holds. Information is one of the most, if not the most, important assets the Council has, and Freedom of Information provides a catalyst to make it more widely available and manage it more efficiently.

The Council wishes to conduct its business in an open and honest fashion. When the Council makes a decision, it is important that the Public is informed how these decisions have been made. The provisions of the Freedom of Information Act will enable the Public to understand the Council and its work through improved access to information.

Availability - The Council will make information publicly available unless there is sound operational or public interest reasons for not doing so or there are legal reasons preventing it in particular reasons relating to the Data Protection Act and the privacy of individuals.

Confidentiality - Similarly the Council will not classify documents as CONFIDENTIAL without clear justification for doing so.

Exemptions - The Council recognises that the exemptions to access in the Freedom of Information Act may allow the Council not to release a document but do not prevent it from releasing that document.

Equality - The Council will develop an environment in which access to information is not dependent on a person's physical, social or educational circumstances, or first language.

Charges - The Council will charge any fee allowed by the Freedom of Information or Data Protection Acts and Regulations to help cover the cost of finding and making available the requested information. Where the applicant requests information which would cost more than the maximum allowed by Regulations, the Council will endeavor to agree with the applicant either a reduced requirement or that he/she will pay the full cost. The Council will not seek to profit from the operation of Freedom of Information legislation – instead seeking only to cover its costs.

Records management - The Council will specify adequate filing, retention, security, tracking, destruction and recycling standards as part of its ongoing development with data.

Request to view or receive information:-

Please provide your name, address and either a contact telephone/fax number or email address, stating if the request relates to the Freedom of Information Act. Please detail the request itself and what format the documentation is required. Please also specify the preferred method of communication i.e. post, email or fax etc. The Parish Council is legally required to provide information within 20 working days of receipt. However every attempt to provide the information sooner will be made where possible. Council will maintain contact with the applicant through this process advising of any delays where applicable.